APPENDIX A
ALTERNATIVES' SCREENING PROCESS DESCRIPTION

APPENDIX A ALTERNATIVES' SCREENING PROCESS SUMMARY

This appendix contains a description of the process used to select alternatives for the Verona Road/West Beltline Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). The following text briefly explains the process, the ideas considered, and why each of the ideas was or was not put forward as an alternative in the EIS.

A.1 SCREENING INTRODUCTION

A.1.1 SCREENING PROCESS

The Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT) has been identifying needs and developing alternatives for the Verona Road/West Beltline corridors since 1997. Throughout the process, WisDOT has interacted with affected communities through advisory committees and several public input sessions. WisDOT initially looked at the two corridors with a Needs Assessment that spanned from 1997 to 1999. After the Needs Assessment, WisDOT performed an Alternatives Analysis study that developed short-, intermediate-, and long-term alternatives for the two corridors. At the end of the Alternatives Analysis process, the advisory committees stated that the needs were great enough and the alternatives substantial enough that WisDOT should initiate the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process that would result in an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). This recommendation produced a resolution to that same end that was endorsed by the City Councils of Madison and Fitchburg. This EIS is a product of those resolutions and assesses the environmental effects of intermediate- and long-term improvements to the US 151/Verona Road and US 12/14 (West Beltline) corridors.

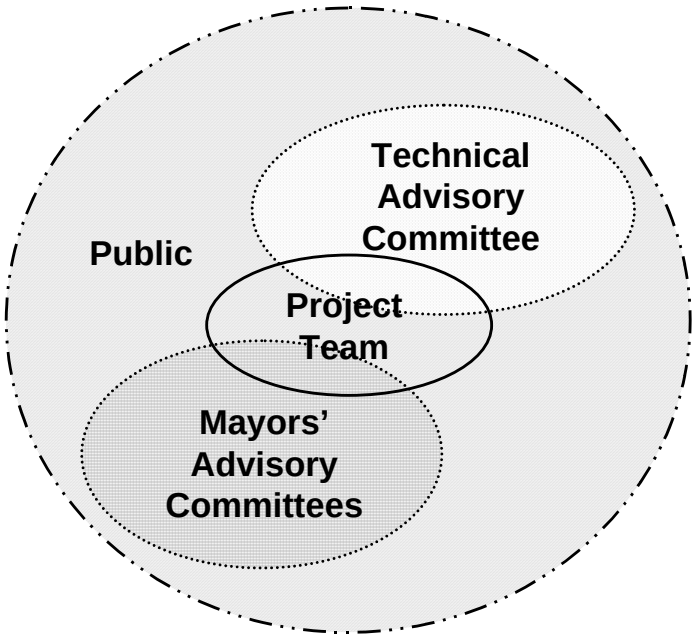

Figure A.1.1-1 Groups Selecting Alternatives

The following paragraphs describe the process used to select alternatives during the preparation of this Verona Road/West Beltline EIS.

A. Participants

Four general groups helped screen the alternatives that were moved forward in the process. Figure A.1.1-1 shows the four groups were:

- The Project Team was selected by WisDOT to provide technical assistance in developing alternatives and evaluating their effectiveness and environmental costs. The project team also helped facilitate interaction with communities and agencies in developing the alternatives.

- The Technical Advisory Committee consists of staff representatives from the City of Fitchburg, City of Madison, City of Middleton, Madison Area Metropolitan Planning Organization, Dane County, and Madison Metro. Most of the representatives were from transportation and planning departments of these jurisdictions.

- Two Mayors' Advisory Committees were formed to assist with alternative development. The City of Madison sponsored one advisory committee made of alderpersons, neighborhood representatives, and business representatives. This committee primarily focused on alternatives that affected the Beltline and the US 151 interchange. The City of Fitchburg also sponsored an advisory committee made up of similar representation. This committee focused on US 151 alternatives, including the US 151-Beltline interchange.

- Public interaction was also a large component of the process. The project sponsored numerous focus groups, design workshops, and public interaction meetings. Throughout the six-year process, the study team hosted literally hundreds of interaction opportunities at business breakfasts, landowner meetings, workshops, and special presentations to neighborhoods and special groups.

B. Process Summary

Each of the four groups, the project team, the technical advisory committee, the mayors' advisory committees, and the public, played roles in screening and refining alternatives for the EIS. Figure A.1.1-2 shows how ideas were typically generated by the project team, presented to the committees for comment, and presented to the public for comment. At the committee and public meetings, the project team listened for comments, input, and ideas bringing new insight into the alternatives. On several occasions, the committees or the public shed new light onto alternatives and encouraged further exploration of options that had not been considered.

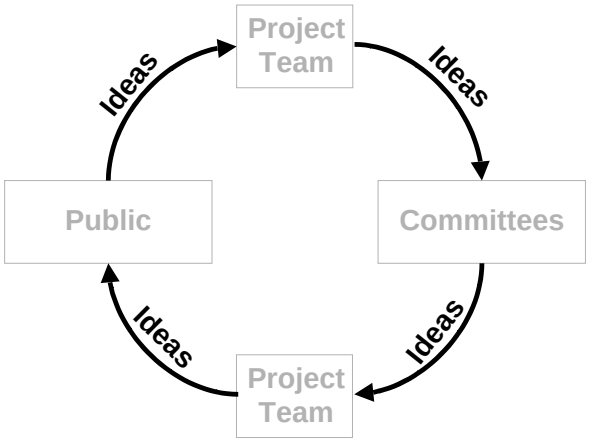

Figure A.1.1-2 Evolution of Alternatives Process

The exchange of ideas will continue throughout the EIS process. After releasing the Draft EIS, the public has opportunities to comment at public hearings, and the project team formally responds to comments in the Final EIS.

A.1.2 SCREENING CRITERIA

Throughout the alternatives' screening process, several criteria formed the basis upon which to make decisions. Criteria included the project purpose and need, site context, operations analysis, and public response.

A. Purpose and Need

The purpose of the Verona Road/West Madison Beltline project is to enhance the mobility of both motorized and nonmotorized vehicles in the US 151 and the US 12/14 corridors. Key objectives of the project include:

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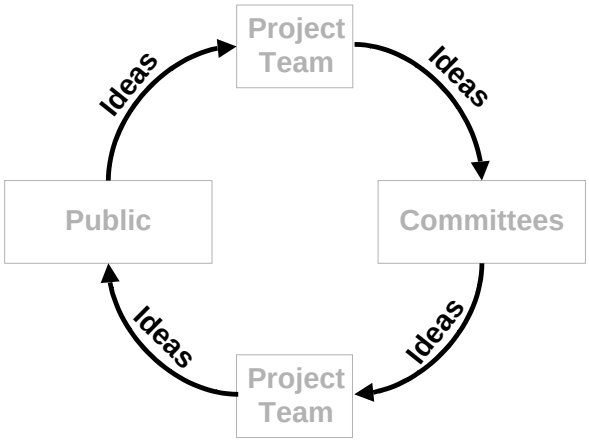

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- Increasing US 151 system continuity and consistency with the Corridors 2020 State Highway Plan. For US 151/Verona Road that means being a high speed, expressway-type facility and providing Level of Service (LOS) C[1] or better.
- Increasing US 12/14 consistency with the Corridors 2020 State Highway Plan. For US 12/14 (Beltline) that means providing LOS D or better.
- Improving Regional mobility.
- Improving Safety.
- Improving Neighborhood connectivity, including transit and nonmotorized travel.
- Accommodating Metropolitan traffic movements and local access.

Since 1980, Dane County and the Madison metropolitan area have been growing at phenomenal rates. At the same time, the amount people drive on a yearly basis has steadily increased. The combination of population growth and increased travel has resulted in increasing congestion on area arterials. This decreases the mobility of these corridors and decreases interneighborhood connectivity. There is also an increased public awareness and support for alternate forms of transportation, including transit, safe bicycle and pedestrian facilities, and neighborhood connectivity bridging transportation facilities.

These needs were used as the basis for alternatives' screening criteria. See Sections I-1, II-1, or III-1 for more complete explanations of the purpose and need.

B. Site Context/Operations Analysis

Another set of screening criteria included the site of the proposed alternative and analysis of traffic operations after the alternative is implemented. The project team spent time considering:

- The future transportation needs of the area.
- The operational effectiveness of possible alternatives determined by traffic modeling and pedestrian/bicycle connectivity.
- The direct impacts of possible alternatives.
- The neighborhood and business context of the alternative and how a given alternative affects that context.
- A prioritization of need when comparing an area with the needs of the larger corridor.

The Whitney Way interchange is an example where site context and operations analysis were important screening factors. While many alternatives were developed for this interchange, projected traffic demands and the established adjacent land uses lead the study team to bring less intrusive improvement measures forward into the EIS.

C. Public Response

Public response is an important tool used for alternatives' screening. The project team considered public support for alternatives at project meetings held throughout the process and through letters and correspondence sent to the project team. The South Reliever Concept is one alternative where a lack of public support was a contributing factor to its dismissal.

[1] Levels of Service are measures that describe the operation of a roadway and its congestion levels. They range from A (not congested) to F (very congested).

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